

TO: State Directors
Rural Development

ATTN: Rural Housing Program Directors, Rural Development
Multi-Family Housing Staff, State Civil Rights
Coordinators/Managers, Rural Development Managers,
and Community Development Managers

FROM: James C. Kearney (Signed by James C. Kearney)
Administrator
Rural Housing Service

SUBJECT: Tenant Self-Sufficiency Initiatives and Multi-Family Housing
(MFH) Network Centers

PURPOSE/INTENDED OUTCOME:

The purpose of this Administrative Notice (AN) is to address tenant self-sufficiency initiatives and the benefits of MFH Network Centers.

COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS AN: This AN replaces AN No. 3443 (1930-C), dated January 19, 1999.

IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES:

Upon receipt of this AN, State Directors are encouraged to inform property owners and management companies of the opportunity to implement tenant self-sufficiency initiatives and develop MFH network centers. The Rural Housing Service supports promoting and assisting owners in providing services that meet the needs of low-income families and seniors in their communities. The goal is to improve MFH tenants' quality of life and self-sufficiency by providing "on-site" services such as computer training, reading programs for children, resume preparation for job seekers, location of job vacancies, job development and/or readiness opportunities, tutoring services for school children and adults, health and social services, physical fitness classes, meals on wheels for seniors, drug education programs, and life skills.

EXPIRATION DATE: January 31, 2002

FILING INSTRUCTIONS:
Preceding RD
Instructions 1930-C

Benefits of Network Centers:

- **Residents** gain access to technology that can help them improve their job skills, children improve their educational performance and expand their knowledge through computer research, develop and/or enhance computer skills of all participating residents, reduce welfare dependency and empower residents for greater employability. Many residents have been successful in obtaining employment with computer companies or starting their own home-based businesses, and in several cases work from home using their own computers.
- **Property owners** build lasting relationships with residents and community partners. The effort can attract new residents and retain existing tenants, thereby keeping vacancy rates low.
- **Technology partners** gain access to a new workforce and potential customers while helping to expand business, employment, educational and health opportunities for residents.
- **Communities** become more cohesive as citizens' work together to improve education, expand employment opportunities and increase economic self-reliance.
- **Welfare-To-Work** participants use center to increase employability, prepare for the workforce, locate and obtain decent paying positions.

How to implement: Potential centers should be hosted by borrowers, property managers, complex residents, local government and businesses.

Facilitating community partnering:

- Contact businesses, which may be willing to donate hardware or software.
- Solicit people equipped to train residents in computer operation, technology, etc.
- Establish network efforts with local/national businesses who can assist with training or who are willing to accept newly trained individuals to produce a "product," whether it be a newsletter, software testing or other types of service(s) that could be done off the business site in the complex.

Training Sources: Most businesses participate in community services if asked by property owners or resident boards/associations. Businesses have been known to donate computer programs and computer systems to resident network programs, as well as allow their staff to provide training to residents and community members on a volunteer basis. In addition, some businesses have or are willing to establish community programs such as "Apples or Computers for Students" which allow schools to acquire computerized credit or shopping receipt redemption in order to purchase computers or computer software.

As a part of many high school graduation curriculums, community service is a requirement. Students with skills in computer design, programming and techniques make good instructors for elementary, middle and high school students in network centers.

College students and school teachers provide their services at network centers to help residents improve their skills in a number of areas such as tutor students in various subjects, prepare resumes for employment, locate jobs on the computer, apply for positions, and role play to help residents' prepare for upcoming job interviews.

Opportunities for property owners, managers and residents who are provided access to network centers are endless. The beforementioned services or programs are just a small example of what can happen if network centers are developed on MFH properties.

What The Agency Can Provide:

- **A place to have these things happen.** Most senior complexes have community rooms. Most family complexes do not. Therefore, as family complexes are rehabilitated, owners should be encouraged to add a community room to their construction plans. Also, property owners may use operating or reserve funds to renovate one or two ground level units in order to establish network centers. If there are no available units but space is available for an addition, the center can be built on the property to meet the needs of the residents. In all preceding examples, the complex must be on sound financial footing and the resulting rent should not be greater than comparable market rents.
- **Equipment/Software.** This AN authorizes the use of project operating and reserve funds for the purchase of hardware, software, computer connection hook-up and installation of telephones in order to implement and/or bring network centers on-line. However, if funds are not available for some properties to purchase computers for their intended centers, this office will attempt to help interested borrowers acquire recently sanitized Pentium computers, which are no longer being used by Rural Housing Service.

Funding: Network centers are sustained through partnerships, business opportunities, innovative income generating efforts developed by the complex's residents, and minimum proposed expenditures noted in annual budget. An example of income generating efforts are (1) the design and maintenance of websites for small businesses, (2) allowing non-complex community residents to utilize computer center for a small fee, (3) designing and selling complex newspapers, (4) contracting to design flyers, programs and newsletters for community organizations, churches, grocery stores, schools, malls, small businesses, etc., and/or (5) bartering with exiting centers and community business partners to set-up computer systems, secure/design programs and assisting with the activation of new centers at other facilities. Internet service charge and telephones for the center will be paid from the projects' operating fund.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact Edith Brown of the Multi-Family Housing Portfolio Management Division at (202) 720-1600.